

Illinois' largest union has close relationship with ACORN, which is being investigated, Kirk said

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On the heels of a congressional vote to de-fund ACORN, U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Ill.) is calling on the U.S. Census to sever all ties to Illinois' largest union, the Service Employees International Union, because that union, Kirk says, is too close to ACORN.

Kirk also urged the firing of the National Intelligence Officer for the Middle East, who he blames for under-estimating Iran's nuclear capabilities.

U.S. Rep. Peter Roskam (R-Ill.) and U.S. Rep. Patrick McHenry (R-Va.) joined Kirk in raising the red flags about SEIU because of what Kirk called, "the close inter-relationship in management, location, leadership, and financing between [ACORN and SEIU.] SEIU Local 880 used to boast it was founded by ACORN. ... I think the integrity of the Census is in danger if [SEIU] so closely linked to [ACORN] is still involved in the federal census."

The Census Bureau uses SEIU to recruit people to go out and be census-takers, Kirk said. He could not provide a dollar amount for how much the Census might give SEIU-referred workers.

SEIU leaders say ACORN closed its Chicago offices two years ago. Prior to that, the Bush Administration and even Kirk himself voted to give federal money to the group. It was only during the last election that many of the group's chapters were accused of vote fraud. Kirk also received campaign donations from an SEIU-funded group. Kirk said Monday he would send that money back.

The Republican congressmen laid out a graphic showing the flow of money from branches of the SEIU to branches of ACORN and ACORN offshoot groups.

Nationally, SEIU has contributed \$4 million to ACORN, they said. In Chicago, SEIU's locals 1 and 880 have contributed \$230,000 to ACORN groups in Illinois and in Texas, they said.

Last week SEIU endorsed Kirk's front-runner Democratic opponent Alexi Giannoulias. But Kirk said his concerns about SEIU pre-dated that endorsement. Last year he called on Lake County officials to launch a criminal investigation of alleged vote fraud by an SEIU worker there in the last election.

Kirk reacted angrily to last week's revelation about Iran's nuclear launches.

"I think we have serious problems now inside the U.S. Intelligence community that issued their report in 2007 saying that the nuclear weapon and missile programs in Iran were less of a threat than we thought," Kirk said. "We now see a set of launches this weekend that shows the missile program is now increasing, and the reporting on the nuclear program was completely in error ... I think the National Intelligence Officer for the Middle East should be fired."